

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PM-04

NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 MCT-01 /055 W

-----110653Z 004219 /13

R 110530Z FEB 77

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4367

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0117

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, ET

SUBJECT: ANTI-SUDANESE DEMONSTRATION

1. SUMMARY: THE SCHEDULED DEMONSTRATION IN ASMARA WHICH WAS DESIGNED TO COUNTERACT THE ANTI-EPMG DEMONSTRATION IN KHARTOUM CAME OFF WITHOUT EITHER SIGNIFICANT INCIDENT OR ANY OBSERVABLE ENTHUSIASM BY THE PARTICIPANTS. IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE EPMG AUTHORITIES SPARED NO EFFORT TO ASSURE THE SUCCESS OF THIS DEMONSTRATION IN THE FACE OF THEIR PARTIAL FAILURE IN A SIMILAR EXERCISE FEB 3. KEBELE (PRECINCT) LEADERS, UNION OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYERS WERE WARNED, WITHOUT SUBTLETY, OF ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES IF A LARGE TURNOUT WERE NOT ASSURED. SECURITY MEASURES WERE ALSO APPRECIABLY GREATER THAN IN THE PAST TO FORESTALL INSURGENT

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DISRUPTION. END SUMMARY.

2. APPARENTLY ON RECEIPT OF INSTRUCTIONS FROM ADDIS TO STAGE A DEMONSTRATION TO COUNTER-BALANCE THE RECENT ANTI-EPMG/PRO-ERITREAN DEMONSTRATION IN KHARTOUM, THE REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION CAREFULLY PLANNED AND ORCHESTRATED AN ANTI-SUDAN DEMONSTRATION ON FEB 10. WHILE ONCE AGAIN TERMING THE POPULAR DISPLAY AS "SPONTANEOUS",

THEY TOOK STEPS TO ASSURE BOTH AN IMPRESSIVE TURNOUT AND MINIMAL DISRUPTION BY INSURGENTS.

3. ON EVENING NEWS BROADCAST FEB 9 RADIO ASMARA ANNOUNCED AS A LATE BULLETIN THAT THERE WAS TO BE A DEMONSTRATION THE FOLLOWING MORNING AND THAT ALL COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS WERE TO CLOSE BETWEEN 9 AM AND 12 NOON. THE VARIOUS UNION AND KEBELE GROUPS BEGAN TO ASSEMBLE AT A SITE NEAR THE REGIONAL HQ AT 9 AM. AN ESTIMATED 10,000 PLUS PARTICIPANTS HAD GATHERED BY 10 AM, TESTIMONY TO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EPMG WARNINGS TO KEBELE LEADERS THAT THEIR FOOD RATION COUPONS WOULD BE SUSPENDED IF THEY DID NOT PRODUCE A BETTER TURNOUT THAN ON FEB 3. SEVERAL UNION LEADERS AND EMPLOYERS WERE REPORTEDLY THREATENED WITH ARREST IF THEY DID NOT COOPERATE IN BOOSTING THE TURNOUT.

4. THE CROWD WAITED LISTLESSLY AS EVEN AFTER 10 AM NO ONE HAD APPEARED TO OCCUPY THE EMPTY CHAIRS ON THE MAKESHIFT PODIUM. POSTERS WHICH LOOKED AMAZINGLY SIMILAR TO THOSE OF LAST WEEK'S PRO-EPMG DEMONSTRATION WERE DISTRIBUTED. AT 10:13 A LOUD EXPLOSION OCCURRED WITHIN SEVERAL BLOCKS OF THE GATHERING, DUST AND SMOKE BEING VISIBLE TO THE CROWD. THE SHAKEN DEMONSTRATORS SOUGHT TO FLEE THE ASSEMBLY AREA ONLY TO BE TURNED BACK BY THE SECURITY FORCES. A FEW MINUTES LATER THE CROWD WAS BRIEFLY AMUSED BY A RATTLED OFFICIAL WHO ATTEMPTED TO CALM THE CROWD BY FIRST TELLING THEM IT WAS AN ACCIDENTAL EXPLOSION, AND MOMENTS LATER ADMITTING IT WAS JUST SOME PEOPLE ATTEMPTING TO DISRUPT THE EVENT. THIS SPEAKER THEN INSTRUCTED THE CROWD TO BEGIN MARCHING ALONG A PRESCRIBED ROUTE TO THE SUDANESE CONSULATE GENERAL. AS THE CROWD BEGAN TO MARCH, ANOTHER UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER SEIZED THE MICROPHONE  
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AND BRIEFLY HARANGUED THE DEPARTING PARTICIPANTS ON THE PURPOSE OF THE DEMONSTRATION.

5. IN SILENCE THE MARCHERS CLOSELY ESCORTED BY SECURITY GUARDS, MOVED OFF TOWARD THE SUDANESE CONSULATE SOME EIGHT BLOCKS AWAY. A SECOND MORE DISTANT EXPLOSION AT 11:30 DID NOT DETER THE MARCHERS. WHEN THE COLUMN REACHED THE CONSULATE THEY WERE HALTED FOR FIVE MINUTES BY THE SECURITY FORCES. THEY STOOD THERE IN SILENCE WHILE EPMG MEDIA TOOK PHOTOGRAPHS WHICH THEY HAD ALSO DONE FREQUENTLY ALONG THE MARCH. THE MARCHERS THEN PROCEEDED DOWN THE SAME STREET PAST THE SUDANESE RESIDENCE WHERE A SMALL DELEGATION PRESENTED THE SUDAN CONSUL GENERAL WITH A MEMORANDUM IN AMHARIC. THE CONGEN IS REPORTED TO HAVE ENHANCED HIS STATURE WITH THE ERITREANS BY CALMLY STANDING ON HIS FRONT BALCONY AS IF REVIEWING A DRESS PARADE. ONCE HAVING PASSED THE RESIDENCE THE MARCHERS WERE PERMITTED BY THEIR GUARDS TO DISPERSE WITHIN THE NEXT FEW BLOCKS. AN INSPECTION OF THE AREA AFTER THE MARCH CONFIRMED THAT THERE WERE NO HANDBILLS IN THE STREETS OR POSTERS PLASTERED ON THE WALLS. DURING THE ENTIRE PROCESSION, THE MARCHERS REMAINED WITHIN THEIR

OWN UNITS, EACH CLEARLY IDENTIFIED BY SIGNS AS WELL AS POSTERS  
WITH ANTI-SUDAN SLOGANS.

6. THERE WAS NO ANTI-AMERICAN ELEMENT REPORTED IN THE DEMONSTRATION  
AND NO AMERICAN PERSONNEL OR PROPERTY WAS AFFECTED. DURING THE  
MORNING, EPMG SECURITY IN THE CENTER OF THE CITY WAS MASSIVE.  
SEVERAL THOUSAND POLICE AND MILITARY PERSONNEL WERE VISIBLE ALONG  
STREETS; ON ROOFTOPS, AND BEHIND SANDBAG BUNKERS. ESCORT FORCES  
FOR THE MASSAWA CONVOY WERE ALSO DIVERTED TO THIS SECURITY DETAIL.  
THE DEMONSTRATORS WERE CLOSELY ESCORTED BY ARMED GUARDS AT ALL  
TIMES AND NO ONE WAS PERMITTED TO DEPART UNTIL THE PURPOSE  
OF THE DEMONSTRATION HAD BEEN ACCOMPLISHED. ALONG THE STREET  
WHERE THE SUDANESE CONSULATE AND RESIDENCE ARE LOCATED, SEVERAL  
HUNDRED HEAVILY ARMED TROOPS LINED THE SIDEWALK ON BOTH SIDES.

7. COMMENT: WE HAVE REPORTED THIS INCIDENT IN DETAIL TO ILLUSTRATE  
HOW DETERMINED AND EFFECTIVE THE REGIONAL AUTHORITIES COULD BE  
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IN PREPARING AND IMPLEMENTING A SUBSTANTIAL PROPAGANDA DISPLAY.  
LAST WEEK IT WAS DIFFICULT TO  
RECOGNIZE OUR MINI  
DEMONSTRATION  
IN THE EFFUSIVE, EXAGGERATED PRESS ACCOUNTS CLAIMING 100,000  
ENTHUSIASTS. AGAIN THIS WEEK THE EPMG PRESS ACCOUNTS MAY BE  
EQUALLY FALSE  
FROM THE TRUTH. THE SPECTACLE OF 10,000 OR MORE MARCHERS  
WHO REMAINED SILENT THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE EVENT MUST HAVE BEEN  
SOMEWHAT UNNERVING TO THE ORGANIZERS.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Enclosure:** n/a  
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**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
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